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DCR and State Police: Walking on Frozen Charles River is Dangerous and Strongly Discouraged

BOSTON - The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and Massachusetts State Police (MSP) strongly discourage residents and visitors along the Esplanade and Charles River from walking on or across the river due to the risks posed to public safety and first responders.

While the Charles River can ice over in the winter, and the ice may look very stable, walking on the frozen River could be dangerous and deadly. Unlike many ponds on which people ice skate in the winter, the level of the River changes constantly every day (as much as two-feet) due to a number of factors including changing inflow and the release of River water to the ocean through the New Charles River Dam. The result is that the ice on the River could have a large air-void below it, thereby weakening the ice and increasing the chance of someone walking on top of it falling through.

In addition, an increase in the River level will have the effect of lifting the ice, causing it to crack and break, increasing the chances of a walker atop the ice falling through. With warmer temperatures during the day, and freezing temperatures at night, the ice in the Charles River can easily be compromised. Attempting to walk on or cross the Charles River is dangerous, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts does not condone this activity. Signage denoting the "Unsafe Ice Conditions" has been placed along areas of the river to further warn constituents of the dangers of attempting to walk on, cross, or engage in any other activity along the Charles River while it appears to be in a frozen state.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, dams, and parkways. Led by Commissioner Jack Murray, the agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.

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